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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue explore inventive ways of teaching literature, including the use of works written by Wisconsin residents. The titles of the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "From Wau-Bun to Door Way" (Richard Boudreau); (2) "The Reading Tree" (Richard Behm); (3) "Manipulating Language: A Strategy for Teaching Literature" (Prudence P. Byers); (4) "Teaching the Absurd" (Audrey Roberts); and (5) "An Englishman's View of Teaching Shakespeare" (Bryan M. Govett). A list of National Council of Teachers of English Achievement Award winners from Wisconsin, as well as reviews of selected books for children, adolescents, and teachers are included. (HTH)

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# wisconsin english journal

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For English Teachers At All Levels
January, 1984 Volume 26, No. 2

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# Wisconsin English Journal

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Eau Claire Civic Center

Theme: The Ecosystem of Language

Members: $ 12 (preregistration), $ 15 (on-site)
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# WISCONSIN AUTHORS: FROM WAU-BUN TO DOORWAY

RICHARD BOUDREAU
University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse

In any overview of Wisconsin literature we must begin by defining what we mean by a "Wisconsin" author. Our definition has to be narrow enough so that we do not include writers whose residence in the state has been of slight duration, writers such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Saul Bellow, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, or Larry Wolwode. Yet it must be broad enough not to exclude some fine state writers whose writing does not, for whatever reason, make use of a Wisconsin setting, writers such as Helen C. White, Robert Bloch, Anne Powers, or Herbert Kubly.

Of course, what we are trying to define is a Wisconsinite, and put that baldly, we should already have a pretty general idea of who should qualify even though the required length of residence is open to question and the depth of Wisconsin experience is indeterminable. But our definition must further be inclusive enough so that books about Wisconsin by certain "sojourners" are not excluded, books by writers such as Lew Sarett, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Walkter Havighurst, or Carol Ryrie Brink. With these quallifications in mind we are ready to look at 30 of the best of Wisconsin books, all by different authors, which tell us most about our landscape and about ourselves.

Wisconsin literature probably begins with the book, *Wau-Bun* (Chippewa for "dawn"), by Juliette Kinzie (1806-1970). The bulk of the book, first published in 1856, concerns her life as wife of Indian Agent, John Kinzie, at Fort Winnebago from 1830 to 1833. During that time she came to know intimately the neighboring Indians who were greatly destitute and dependent on the annuity payments which were the responsibility of her husband, Shawnee-aw-kee, "Silverman." She learned to share in their ceremonies and friendships, in their griefs and, following her last winter there, even their starvation. Written in the relative ease of her Chicago home 20 years after, *Wau-Bun* was perceptive and entertaining, particularly sympathetic toward the Indian.

Mrs. Kinzie's was a book of wilderness days; *The Life-Line of the Lone One* by Warren Chase (1813-1891) was a book of pioneer days. With his wife and sickly baby, Chase arrived in the raw settlement of Southport, now Kenosha, in 1838. After years of deprivation he took up the cause of Fourrierism, a socialist communal movement, and in May, 1844, led a group of followers to the edge of what is now Ripon to set up the "Wisconsin Phalanx." The community, named Ceresco, thrived. In the meantime Chase served in both constitutional conventions, became a state senator, and finally ran for governor on the Free Soil ticket. After the phalanx disbanded, he told the remarkable story of his life, referring to himself always in the third person as the "lone one."

It was the happenstance of a shattered elbow from an Apache bullet and a tour of duty in vain pursuit of Sitting Bull in 1876 that led Charles King (1844-1933), son of Rufus King, to writing. The maiming forced his retirement from the military, and the tour of duty provided the basis for a talk he gave to a Milwaukee luncheon club. A reporter urged him to write the talk up for the Sunday supplement. King obliged, submitting in all several

articles, duly printed in the *Sentinel* and then collected in the book, *Campaigning With Crook*, in 1880. With that success he turned to fiction, publishing over 60 books about army life from West Point to points West, all, because of his shattered elbow, dictated into a machine or to an anamuensis.

Without doubt, the most familiar lines penned by a Wisconsin writer are these: "Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." They are from the poem, "Solitude," found in the book, *Poems of Passion*, 1883, by Ella Wheeler (1855-1919). Because of the notoriety caused by her former editor's comment that the poems were "immoral," the book, jacketed in scarlet and emblazoned with its title in gold, catapaulted its author to national prominence. Ella, as if it were only her due, went blithely on her way, marrying silversmith Robert Wilcox the following year and moving out East.

Though we often find material for comedy in what politicians do and say, there have been few professional humorists in office. An exception to that was George W. Peck (1840-1916), elected mayor of Milwaukee in 1890 and governor of the state for two terms, beginning in 1891. His most famous creation is "Peck's Bad Boy," but his best book is the hilarious story of *How Private George W. Peck Put Down the Rebellion*. Published in 1887, it is a sustained comedy of an innocent simpleton (none other than our hero) who lacks the objectivity and sense of humor to see the ridiculousness of his actions, though the reader sees through it all. A great deal of its fun arises from Peck's parody of innumerable memoirs of Union veterans who almost (but not quite) claimed they had single-handedly turned the tide in the Civil War; Peck had no such scruples.

Wisconsin's best-known literary native son, Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), was born in West Salem and spent the summers of his middle years there as well. Son of a hardy, ever-westering pioneer, he experienced intimately the drudgery and privations of the farmer in his round of toil and of the wife in hers. Appearing in the last dozen years of the century and collected in several volumes--the best, the 1891 collection, *Main-Travelled Roads*--his short stories incisively describe that life in stark, memorable images. They present the human side of the wrenching passage from pioneer to farmer, from frontier to settlement, and they roundly condemn an economic and social system bent on crushing that free, agrarian life.

Charles D. Stewart (1868-1960) spent nearly all of his long life in Wisconsin, but his best novel, *The Fugitive Blacksmith*, 1905, takes place in Tennessee. The source of the story is the fugitive blacksmith's friend, Stumpy, a one-legged hobo who, like Scheherazade, tells nightly episodes to retain his place in the warmth of the Memphis Yards sand-house. Finerty, the sand-house keeper, relays some of the installments to his wife, who sometimes does the same to her neighbors. The reader, then, gets the story in fragments, sometimes directly from Stumpy, sometimes in Finerty's Irish brogue, and sometimes, by then about fourth-hand, in the softer Irish accents of Finerty's wife.

When Zona Gale (1874-1938) returned to Portage for good, she settled down to take a long, hard look at the life around her. From this period in her career came realistic stories, one of which, *Miss Lulu Bett*, won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1921. But her earlier stories, the best collected in *Friendship Village*, 1908, are, as critics have unfailingly pointed out, blatantly sentimental, almost saccharin: under the watchful aegis of do-gooder Calliope Marsh all wrongs are righted, all loves requited, all quarrels patched up, all misunderstandings cleared up. Critics seem to forget that sentiment or not, the stories give a detailed and authentic picture of small town, USA.

Californians are usually incredulous when told that the savior of Yosemite Valley, John Muir (1838-1914), is not their native son, but ours. Actually he is Scotland's, but he grew up in Wisconsin in the middle of the last century. In *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth,* published in 1912, Muir recalls in marvelous detail his experiences in Scotland and in Wisconsin, particularly on the Fountain Lake farm, 12 miles north of Portage. Inexhaustibly curious, he was a keenly observant and inquisitive lad who pursued the mysteries of nature until he uncovered their well-springs, then contemplated them with wonder and awe.

We didn't have Edna Ferber (1887-1968) for long, but we did have her during some important formative years that left their mark. Born in Kalamazoo, she lived in Chicago and Ottumwa, Iowa, before the family moved to Appleton in 1897. After high school Edna became girl reporter for the Appleton *Post-Crescent*, then for the Milwaukee *Journal* (where she met former reporter, Zona Gale). Recuperating from illness three and a half years later back in Appleton, Edna began writing a story that insisted on becoming a novel, and she was on her way. After her father's death, the family moved back to Chicago. Out of her several Wisconsin short stories and novels the best is *Fanny Herself,* 1917, the story of a search for independence on the part of its heroine.

A number of writers have come to the state to teach--Warren Beck, Samuel G. A. Rogers, Robert Gard--and remained. Perhaps the earliest was William Ellery Leonard (1876-1944) who joined the faculty at UW-Madison in 1906. Following his marriage to the daughter of the English Department chairman in 1909, Leonard learned that his wife had suffered previous nervous breakdowns and seemed to be moving toward another. Anxious over her condition, he sought out a cottage for them to live in peace and quiet, but it became instead the scene of her final tragedy. To assuage his grief following her suicide, Leonard told the story of their courtship and marriage in a series of sonnets. The sequence finally numbered over 200, one of the largest in the English language, and as *Two Lives* it was finally published in 1922. It is as moving and tragic today as it was then, a reading experience not to be missed.

Our most famous expatriate is Glenway Wescott (1901- ), who officially said *Good-Bye Wisconsin* in 1928. Wescott viewed not only his home state, but all of the Midwest, as a wasteland of culture, and he moved first to New York City and finally to France to find a more encouraging climate for his artistry. Ironically, after he had finally "exorcised" his Wisconsin background through writing, he had almost nothing more to say. His finest book, *The Grandmothers,* was published in 1927. The first and last chapters are frames to the probing and realistic portraits of two generations of a pioneer family who had to make compromises, some involving death itself, in order to survive the harsh demands of rural life in Wisconsin. Where Garland traced the effects of economic and social forces on that life, Wescott traced the psychological and emotional.

A protege of Zona Gale, Margery Latimer (1899-1932), published two novels and two collections of short stories before her death at 33. Following her graduation from UW-Madison, she went to New York City where she published her first and best novel, *We Are Incredible,* in 1928. Its narrative concentrates on a small cast of characters and on the enervating and ultimately destructive influence of a single dominant, older woman. The book quite clearly is an attack on Zona Gale, yet it was dedicated to her. Eventually Margery Latimer returned to Portage to live in a Gurdieffian community near Briggsville, married writer Jean Toomer, and died in childbirth.

Best known for his genius in the field of architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959), is also an author of great ability. He was born in Richland Center and grew up in Madison. His aunts and uncles Lloyd-Jones were a stalwart and fiercely independent lot, and to their valley near Spring Green Wright came for a haven of peace when his life seemed to unravel just prior to World War I. In 1932 he published *An Autobiography*. Told with clarity, wit, and humor, it is filled with his memories of that clan from which he sprang, of his experiences as a boy on his Uncle James's farm, his years at UW-Madison and Chicago, his marriage and family life at Oak Park, his separation from his wife, his return to the valley of his youth, and the building of Taliesin and the tragedy of its destruction by fire in 1914.

Except to knowledgeable sci-fi fans, Milwaukeean Stanley G. Weinbaum (1902-1935) is one of our least known writers. Weinbaum is known as the creator of a new breed of aliens, not the malevolent BEM's (and we still have our share of those), but the lovable, humorous, benevolent kind. He had a brilliant grasp of the possibilities for life in the various quarters of our solar system, and by extrapolation he surmised the probable effects on life forms in those widely dispersed environments. He belonged to the Milwaukee Fictioneers, a group of writers which included Robert Bloch. His stories were just beginning to gain attention when he died of throat cancer in 1935. The best introduction to his fertile imagination is the 1974 collection, *The Best of Stanley G. Weinbaum*.

Equally unknown in Wisconsin and equally impressive imaginatively is Eleanor Green (1911- ). Though born and raised in Milwaukee, she wrote primarily about rural or small town Wisconsin, a result of family summers spent on a farm near Portage. After publishing four novels, all generally short, she married, moved East, and dropped from sight. Her women are feminine, yet strong, fully developed characters who often dominate the men. *The Hill*, 1937, probably her best novel, depicts a day-long picnic during the annual reunion of a family who have come from their scattered homes to the ancestral farm in rural Wisconsin. During the day they reveal their hopes and fears, their joys and tragedies. It is an album of family portraits not unlike Wescott's, equally probing, but presented in a simpler, almost poetic manner.

Best known as the author of the novel, *Any Number Can Play*, from which a popular film of the late forties was made, Edward Harris Heth (1909-1963) grew up in Milwaukee, and several of his books are set there. His best is the early novel, *Told With a Drum*, 1937. The narrator, a young boy, tells the story of the effects on his family, especially on his grandfather, Herr Tellinger, who had been the mayor of the city, of the anti-German feeling rampant in the city during the First World War. After numerous successes both in New York City and in Hollywood, Heth suffered a breakdown, and his doctor told him to go back home to Wisconsin. He settled in the country near Wales, and from this experience came his last book, *My Life On Earth*.

Nineteen Thirty-Seven seems to have been a vintage year. Besides Green's and Heth's books, the first book of short stories--and the best--by Jerome Bahr (1909- ), *All Good Americans*, appeared. Through its pages scamper and romp the many characters of the small town of Hillon, a fictionalized Arcadia. From the best to the worst, they're all there, looked at through the eyes of young Ted Karlan, giving the book a *Winesburg, Ohio*, flavor, though more earthy. After leaving Arcadia and after a few years in newspaper work, Bahr became a career man for the U.S. government, but continued to write, publishing seven more volumes.

Another book that ended up as a highly acclaimed movie was *For Our Vines Have Tender Grapes*, published in 1940. Its author was George Victor

Martin (1900-1959), a Chicagoan. At first sight it would seem that he had no connection with our state, but the story clearly takes place along the Tomorrow River in central Wisconsin, and it sounds completely convincing. And of course it is. The nine year old heroine of the book, Selma Jacobson, was modeled on Martin's wife who grew up on a farm near Amherst, and the couple lived there for more than a year during the Depression. The story is a warm-hearted, joyous look at country life in a Norwegian farming community of the 1920's.

*A Sand County Almanac* was never seen in published form by its author, Aldo Leopold (1886-1948) who died a few months before it came out. But since its appearance, its popularity and influence has grown tremendously. The book is an almanac with a series of entries for each month of the year, all related to, or arising from the natural world Leopold saw around him while living on a poor, sandy acreage just south of the Wisconsin River. But the almanac is much more than a nature journal. In it Leopold discusses environment, the balance of nature, and man's effect on both, and his influence in recent environmental movements has been enormous.

One of the most fascinating books by a Wisconsin author, *The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian,* was not even written by her. Mountain Wolf Woman (1884-1960), a Wisconsin Winnebago, was born near Black River Falls and lived most of her life in that area. During the last decade of her life she carefully described her life during tape-recording sessions with anthropologist Nancy Lurie, now director of the Milwaukee Public Museum. Mountain Wolf Woman had such a fine capacity for recall that her memories make up a most unusual record. Her story presents insights into the role of the woman in Winnebago society and into the transition in the traditional practices of her people.

Deciding that Wisconsin was where he wanted to remain no matter the success of his writings, August Derleth (1909-1971) wrote an enormous number of books, probably over 160, most about his home state, particularly the Sauk City-Prairie du Sac area he re-named Sac Prairie. To choose a book out of that mass of material is difficult. But because of its combination of prose and poetic-prose style, of its descriptive and philosophical approach, *Walden West,* published in 1962, is probably the best. To read the book is to become acquainted with the human dynamo called August Derleth. In it, with himself as guide, he describes that microcosm of Sac Prairie, both its human side and its natural side, a fascinating recording of the flora and fauna of inter-related communities.

Another famous Wisconsin novel turned into a popular motion picture is *Rascal*, the work of Sterling North (1906-1974). North grew up in Edgerton, and it is this community and nearby Lake Koshkonong that form the backdrop for the story of a year in the life of a boy and his pet raccoon. Because it is certainly about North's own experiences as a boy there, the story straddles the line between fiction and non-fiction, but it is a heart-warming story for all that. North's earliest writings were about his native Wisconsin, but he did not achieve success until he turned to the field of juvenile books to which *Rascal, The Wolfling,* and *So Dear to My Heart,* Wisconsin books all, belong.

Lorine Niedecker (1903-1970) spent most of her life living in a cabin on a long neck of land at the other end of North's Lake Koshkonong. In her poetry she recorded the thoughts that arose from that life so close to nature along the Rock River. Any of the collections of her poetry are outstanding, but the best is a late collection called, appropriately, *My Life by Water,* published at the time of her death. The poems are generally succinct, pointed, and memorable for their wry twists. For that reason she

is sometimes called the Emily Dickinson of the Midwest. Her reputation has grown steadily, and she is emerging as the finest poet ever to come out of Wisconsin.

One of William Ellery Leonard's most promising students at UW-Madison was Horace Gregory (1989- ). Gregory attended the university at the same time as both Margery Latimer and Stanley G. Weinbaum. He apparently aspired to be a poet from his youth, and when he graduated he naturally settled in New York City, the "hub of the universe" to him. Though he has published a number of volumes of poetry, few of his poems deal with his native state. But there is a delightful work about his early years growing up in Milwaukee called *The House on Jefferson Street*, 1971. There he recreates that same Post-Victorian world of Heth and Ferber, an almost European, and now largely vanished, city in which his English-Irish descended family were strangely out of place.

Another poet of great ability is Felix Pollak (1909- ). Pollak is Viennese by birth, but he fled the Nazi take-over in the late 1930's and came to this country, eventually becoming archivist at UW-Madison library. His poetry is enjoyable because, like few modern poets, he has a great sense of humor. He has published five volumes of poetry, the best, because of its wide range of poem lengths and types on subjects both grave and comic, is the 1973 collection titled *Gingko*. Pollak now lives in retirement in Madison.

One of the rewards of reading is the sharing of lives whose experiences on the surface are so different from our own, but whose deeper experiences touch sympathetic chords. *The Land Remembers*, 1974, is just such a book. In it Ben Logan (1920- ) details the experiences he had growing up on a ridge farm above the Mississippi Valley during the 1920's and '30's. It is filled with the incidentals and essentials of youth and age, transition and death. Arranged according to seasons, the book shifts back and forth during those years, compressing 16 years of experience into the seasonal framework. At the heart of the book is the truth of its title: especially in Wisconsin, the land remembers.

With the publication of his fourth novel, *Ghost Story*, and its subsequent release as a motion picture, Milwaukeean Peter Straub (1943- ) has reached the pinnacle of success. Straub turned to writing while he was a graduate student in Dublin, Ireland. One of his books of the occult, *If You Could See Me Now*, 1977, is set in Wisconsin, not in Milwaukee but in the Arcadia area where he spent summers as a boy. Besides being a gripping story it is filled with sense images of sound, smell and taste, senses that are usually neglected by writers, and the whole presents such a real world that it seems impossible not to believe in the occult occurances within that world.

Peggy Dopp of Wild Rose had a story about the Peshtigo Fire that she needed to tell, and in Barbara Vroman of Hancock she found the perfect writer-collaborator. The result of their work is the enormously successful *Tomorrow is a River*. 1977. "Enormously" because they were their own publishers and marketers, yet the book has gone through several printings and sold over 15,000 copies. The book begins in the wilderness along the Tomorrow River in 1856. The heroine, Carolyn Quimby, is abandoned by her husband, falls deeply in love with a man she cannot marry, and turns to the care of handicapped children to keep her purpose in life, and it plays against a backdrop of stirring events.

Chicago native, Norbert Blei (1936- ), moved to the Door County Peninsula 15 years ago. There he found the peace and privacy so necessary

*Continued on page 15*

# THE READING TREE

RICHARD BEHM
University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point

It is not difficult to get teachers to agree that an individualized reading program can be very helpful in a literature course. Students who can choose what they want to read are more likely to read with interest, perhaps even enthusiasm than those who are force-fed. Interested students are more likely to discuss, think, and learn to appreciate literature.

The rationale for individualizing the literature course is rooted in the idea that literature and the study of literature are humanizing activities. We study literature not to become proficient at critical dissection (some might say desiccation) of poems and stories, but to reach a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of our lives, our selves. The most cogent voice for this broad function of literature is Louise Rosenblatt (*Literature as Exploration*, Noble and Noble, 1965). Rosenblatt asserts that "The problem that the teacher faces first of all, then, is the creation of a situation favorable to a vital experience of literature." (p. 61) Unfortunately, one of the main elements working against creating a favorable situation for the experience of literature is the traditional model of the literature course and classroom, based primarily upon secondary and elementary teachers' experiences in their college and graduate literature classes. Individualizing the literature course, rearranging its structure, and creating reader-based assignments are useful alternatives to the traditional literature course model.

There are, however, problems with individualization. The most obvious difficulty is that a completely individualized reading program puts a huge workload on a teacher. A teacher who would attempt a completely individualized reading program for four sections of a literature course with twenty-five students in each . . . well, that teacher is a candidate for either beatification or Bedlam. Another problem with complete individualization is that it, for the most part, eliminates class discussion, which when properly handled can be an important source of enlightenment for all.

The Reading Tree is an effective compromise between complete individualization and the traditional course structure most teachers are used to. The Reading Tree permits students choice (and, in fact, encourages choice), while maintaining a core of works for class or small group discussion, and all without overburdening the teacher. It is being used successfully by teachers in middle schools through college. It works like this.

For the sake of illustration, let us take a poetry unit for a tenth grade literature course. Assuming the purpose of such a unit is first and foremost to overcome the resistance many students have to poetry and lead them to an appreciation of poetry, the teacher selects a core of poems that the entire class will read. These poems may be selected and arranged in any way the teacher deems appropriate, including thematically. The poems for The Reading Tree (see page ) have been selected according to three criteria: theme (parent-child relationships), high interest, and chronology. An attempt has been made to arrange the poems in order of degree of difficulty.

The first poems are from contemporary poets and, therefore, are in language that is familiar to the students. The later poems, though still selected on the basis of interest, are more difficult, at least in terms

King Lear
Act I, Sc. 1 (counts 2)
"On My First Daughter" - Ben Jonson
"Do Not Go Gentle Into That Goodnight" - Dylan Thomas
"My Mother The Falconress" - Robert Duncan
"Black Mother Praying" - Owen Dodson
"A Battle of Wills Disguised" - Marge Piercy
"Little Sleeps'-Head Sprouting Hair in Moonlight" -Galway Kinnell
"Big Bessie Throws Her Son into the Street" - Gwendolyn Brooks
"Amusing Our Daughters" - Carolyn Kizer
"Bye-Low, My Babe" - Anonymous Anglo-Saxon Lyric
"Three for the Father" - Philip Dacey
"Not Leaving the House" - Gary Snyder
"On My First Son" Ben Jonson
Option A
Polonius' speech to Laertes-Hamlet Wm. Shakespeare
"To William Shelley" P. B. Shelley
Option B
"Infant Sorrow/ In a Myrtle Shade" William Blake
Option A
"A Prayer for My Daughter" W. B. Yeats
"Ulysses" Alfred Lord Tennyson
Option B
"My Father Moved Through Dooms of Love" e.e.cummings
Option A
"Come Up from the Fields, Father" Walt Whitman
"The Mother" Gwendolyn Brooks
Option B
"My Pappa's Waltz" Theodore Roethke
Option A
"My Father" Judy Collins
"A Woman Mourned By Daughters" Adrienne Rich
Option B
CORE WORKS

of the students' unfamiliarity with the language and syntax in which the poems are written.

The chronology of the selections is, as you have undoubtedly noted, from the present backwards in time. This arrangement avoids one of the problems inherent in chronological couse designs, namely, that students are asked to confront first those works that are most remote from them in time (and sometimes subject matter) and most difficult for them in terms of language. Sequencing the selections from the present to the past also encourages focusing the course on the work themselves, rather than on peripheral background and historical information.

Whatever the course design, though, once the core works have been selected, the teacher than selects two optional works to correspond to each core work. In the case of our hypothetical poetry unit, these optional poems correspond to the core works both in degree of difficulty and in being about the same subjects. Each student in addition to reading the core poem also selectes one of the optional poems. These optional poems may be used for small group discussions, and along with all the poems read by the student, form the basis for written work and exams.

At the top of The Reading Tree is a variety of poems of varying degrees of difficulty and subject matter. From this pool of works the student has the opportunity to select and read as many as he or she chooses. The teacher may also encourage students to bring in poems they have found elsewhere, or perhaps ones they themselves have written to be included in this pool.

The Reading Tree can also be used with novels, although it will obviously be necessary to make some adjustments in quantity and time. In a thematic course with readings from mixed genres, a different reading tree would be constructed for each thematic unit.

One effective technique for using the Reading Tree is to put it on a large poster in the classroom. This technique allows students to see what will be read next and what their options are. Surrounding the tree with tantalizing quotations from the works to be read is also an effective device for stimulating student interest.

A reading journal is an excellent way to keep track of both the quantity and the quality of students' reading. It also encourages personal interaction with the works being read and can serve as a basis for discussion, projects and examinations. The student makes entries in the reading journal, recording what was read, when it was read, copies down any interesting quotations, writes any questions about the work, and does various "free writes."

These free writes are personal responses to the readings, usually done in class. It is useful, especially at the beginning of the course, for the teacher to give specific, focused topics for the free writes. The teacher asks questions or selects quotations for the readings that will help students make connections between what they are reading and their own lives. For long works, the students keep an ongoing record of responses. The journal itself may become a source of further writings. For instance, students should be encouraged to read their earlier entries about a work and then write how their reactions and perceptions have changed.

With the reading journal and The Reading Tree, effective individualization of a literature course can be accomplished, without driving teachers to become hermits or to leap off the roof of the gymnasium.

# MANIPULATING LANGUAGE: A STRATEGY FOR TEACHING LITERATURE

PRUDENCE P. BYERS
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My favorite quote on the subject of literature and language is from Anthony Burgess's *Enderby's End*. Enderby is a big, bloated, dyspeptic Britisher who's teaching at a New York City college. At some point a pompous student says to him, "Poetry is made out of emotions." Enderby replies as follows: "Oh no. Oh very much no. Oh very very much no, and no again. Poetry is made out of words."

We here are clearly on Enderby's side, I think. We believe that students who can be brought to see literature as a species of language will gain in at least two ways. For one, they'll develop a new respect and fondness for their own tongue, having seen what it can do in literature. A lot of students think writing is a conjuring act: some people apparently do it right and others don't, and the difference is a mystery. They don't believe that successful writing is a matter of the selection and arrangement of language materials. They don't really *believe* that changing a sound pattern here, an association there, a syntactic relation elsewhere, will actually alter the effect of the utterance they--or others--produce. When you demonstrate that their own response to a piece of writing derives from a particular selection and combination of sounds and words and sentences, and would disappear if that arrangement were altered, they're amazed. In this case, you're the conjurer, demonstrating the power that inheres in language and its various properties.

Similarly, the student who disdains literature often does so because he despairs of ever understanding what all the fuss is about. Where others hear rhythms, see images, recognize metaphors and symbols, deduce themes, he doesn't. He thinks they're figments in the afflctionado's mind. The trick here is to show him that they're in the language, that you didn't make them up. He may not be a whiz at language, but he's on firmer ground there than in the realm of pure sensibility; most of the time he'll be relieved to know that what he thought was too poetic for him to grasp is right there in black and white on the page, where he can see and touch it.

Teaching literature as a way of using language requires that we go one step beyond the questions "What does this mean?" and "How does this make me feel?" to the question "What *in the language* is making me think or feel this way?" What is in the language of course, is more than just a relation to an external referent. Words don't only have meanings; they have graphological shapes; they have sounds and grammatical forms; they have syntactical and other combinatorial properties that allow them to form larger units--sentences, stanzas, paragraphs, and whole utterances. And these properties make the units of language endlessly manipulable: they can be worked into infinite numbers of shapes and combinations. There's no question that manipulability is a vital factor for artists: their vision consists in seeing that a given material can be shaped into a form it hasn't had before. And the ease with which they can shape it (some artists are good at manipulating paint, others are better with musical notes and intervals) and the ease with which it can be shaped (plastic versus marble, for instance), helps determine their medium and what they do with it. In December, Eleanor Berry, a poet friend of mine,

was at the MLA touting the word-processor as a tool for writing poetry: she claims that because the computer lets her more *easily* manipulate her language--adding, deleting, rearranging changing rhythms, line-ends, and so on, she does more of it and does it more inventively--in other words, she's a better poet.

The sense that the language is manipulable, then, that you can get in there with your hands and work with it, is characteristic of literary artists--people who like language and can use it profitably; I think it would benefit our students if we could develop the same sense in them. One way we can do this, or try to, is by using manipulation in the classroom as a tool for literary study.

What I mean is this: Instead of simply *explaining* that the poetic effect we're experiencing stems from such-and-such a graphologic or phonologic or grammatical or semantic or discursive feature in the poem, we can try to demonstrate it--usually by eliminating the feature in question and seeing if the effect disappears. Doing this can help teach students what makes a poem recognizable *as* a poem! You can turn a piece of non-literary prose into "poetry" by writing it in verse-lines, eliminating its syntactic continuity (no therefores), eliminating its syntactic complexity (no subordination), getting rid of predictions and using nominals instead, and so on. Of course you won't produce good poetry, but your students will understand better than they did before that poeticalness inheres largely in language, and that language can be shaped to a purpose--and not only by poets.

Manipulating language can also help teach students what makes a poem *good*. To illustrate this, I'm going to use Emily Dickinson's "I Like to See It Lap the Miles," (Poem A) a poem more or less about a train.

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its ribs,
And crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop--docile and omnipotent
At its own stable door.

Say we start with graphology--how the poem appears on the page. Maybe you--or your students--decide the separate stanzas look like the cars on a train, or that the gaps between them reinforce the stop-and-start, now slow, now fast, movement of a train. Maybe you think lines four and five, "And then, prodigious, step/Around a pile of mountains" are enhanced by the fact that they "step around" a white space the way the train does the the mountain. Or you think that in "To fit its ribs,/ And crawl between,/ Complaining all the while," the division of lines imitates their meaning, with "And crawl between" literally doing so. Why not test it out? Erase the stanza divisions, combine lines nine and ten and see if there's really a loss.

On the phonological or phonic level, do you think it's important that the rhymes in the poem are approximate instead of exact: "Around a pile of mountains,/And, supercilious, *peer*/In shanties by the sides of roads;/And then a quarry *pare*"? Would exact rhymes hold you up too much at the end of each stanza and destroy the sense of movement from one stanza stanza to the next? Have your students put in some exact rhymes and see:

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, *peer*
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry *shear*

To fit its ribs,
And crawl between,
Complaining as it *will*
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down *hill*. . . .

In stanza three, the last one above, is it important that "to fit its ribs" uses short vowels instead of long ones, as if it's trying to suck in its stomach so something can "crawl between"? Or would "to suit its size," with its long vowels, do just as well? "And then a quarry pare/To suit its size,/And crawl between, . . . ."

Conversely, in that same stanza, would the effect of the lines "Complaining all the while/In horror, hooting stanza" be the same if the vowels were short? "And grumbling as it will/In hostile, hissing stanza. . . ."?

What if your voice didn't lower in pitch when you say "And chase itself down hill"? Replace "itself" and "down hill" with words more likely to be stressed (more clearly in the class of lexical, open-class items) and see what happens: "Complaining all the while/In horrid, hooting stanza,/Then chase down hill and dale. . . ."

When you come to syntax, your class will probably say that it's vital that the poem be one long sentence held together by conjunctions (and) and adverbs (then). Find out; make Dickinson's semi-colons into periods, and make the conjunctions following them into subjects. Poem B illustrates what happens when you do this and add exact rhyme too.

Poem B

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up;
It stops to feed itself at tanks,
As real horses sup.

I watch it round the mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads,
As if it finds them queer.

It carves through rock,
And crawls between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza,
Then starts its final mile.

It neighs like Boanerges;
Then punctual as a star,
Stops--docile and omnipotent--
At its own stable bar.

Poem C

I like to see it race for miles,
Across the valley floor,
And stop at a re-fueling tank;
And then, prodigious, steer

Around a pile of mountains,
And, sleek with power, pass
By shanties at the sides of roads;
And then at quarries, part

The wall of rock,
And crawl between,
Producing all the while
A horrid, hooting stanza;
Then race away down hill

With all its engines roaring;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop--useful yet omnipotent--
At my own station door.

Finally, lexis or semantics: Is it important to the poem that certain words apply to horses, even though it's not horses but trains that run cross country, hoot horridly, and stick close to shanty towns? Eliminate the horse references, as in Poem C, and see what's left.

These manipulations I'm recommending don't really prove anything, of course: You can't draw firm conclusions from the elimination of one feature, since a change in one inevitably changes others. But that's part of the lesson. That language can be manipulated is one point. That it's very hard to manipulate *successfully* is another.

## TEACHING THE ABSURD

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I wanted to ease up at the end of the semester--give the students a breather before finals--and end with a play we could read through in its entirety (instead of landing on "key lines"). I chose Harold Pinter's *The Dumbwaiter*--easy to read in two class hours, involving three readers each day, and not requiring a great deal of stage movement. My concerns were how to make the play "important" after Shakespeare's *Othello* and how to explain Theater of the Absurd to college freshman who had a hard time distinguishing sentimental from romance and melodrama from tragedy. As it turned out--we had the most animated discussions of the semester.

Pinter's play *The Dumbwaiter* is about two "hit men" waiting in a rented room, knowing only a ritual of instructions that end when they kill the person who enters through the door on the right. It is an absurd mixture of frustration, farce and tragedy. Ben and Gus exchange banal conversation which is interrupted by mysterious food requests delivered on a dumbwaiter located between two cots in the room. They scramble, totally irrelevantly, to fill the orders; Gus exits through the door on the left from time to time--going to the toilet or trying to make a cup of tea on a stove offstage. The play's shocking surprise ending seems a sinister variant of "The Lady or the Tiger." The play is comic in its thick-headed but thin-skinned characters and their ridiculous activities. It is tragic, in a modern sense, portraying action and acquiescence that express dehumanization.

To have talked about Theater of the Absurd in existential terms of metaphysical anguish or dictionary terms of an irrational and meaningless universe, life with no meaning outside one's own existence, would have overwhelmed the students and lost them. And so, for a start, we listed several connotations for the word 'absurd' and defined them in our own terms.

1) ridiculous (funny - outlandish)

2) incomprehensible (meaningless - can't figure it out - no rational relationship)

3) inconceivable (out of this world - cosmic)

4) confused and confusing (poor communication between people - crossed wires - poor connections between people and institutions - no control over things)

5) incongroous (no connection between cause and effect)

We concluded that these conditions could cause restlessness, irritability, anxiety, even despair. The students easily identified places in the play where all these conditions existed and named them absurd. For example, they thought the items requested: from sago pudding to Macaroni Pastitsio were--ridiculous, they couldn't figure out why the men bothered to try to fill them--incomprehensible. They wondered who or what was upstairs (yes, we wondered if it was God)--inconceivable. That the dumbwaiter kept sending orders down was--something over which they had no control. They observed that Ben and Gus talked past each other, each not listening to the other--poor communication; that they reversed positions about "lighting" the kettle or "putting it on;" that Ben read the same paper over and over--both ridiculous. They thought it strange that the men never knew where they were or when they would be called for a job--poor connection with world. The toilet not flushing till minutes after the chain was pulled, they considered classic break in cause and effect. They noted Gus's restlessness, their own irritability in not understanding what was happening. What the students found most absurd was that Ben and Gus expressed outrage and shock that a child should kill a cat, or a man be run over by a truck, but never recognized their own condition: unknowing and unquestioning, following instructions to murder.

Finally, the conclusion made them anxious. Uncertainty over who stripped Gus, who pushed him into the room through the door on the right, and whether Ben would follow orders and shoot him, involved everyone in conjecture, argument and confusion, all contributing to our anxiety and finally despair at the impossibility of guessing what would happen next. There was catharsis, though not for a classic tragic hero. Rather, we experienced pity and terror for Gus, whom we identified as an anti-hero, caught in an absurd situation in an absurd world containing the full range of connotations we had specified. The class now felt they understood the existential sense of absurdity and became friends with Theater of the Absurd.

From Wau-Bun to Door Way
*Continued from page 7*

for his writing of short stories and novels, and there he also found unexpected material for his writings. His *Door Way*, 1981, is a conglomeration of interviews of Door County residents, real people whose lives often touch one another, and whose lives are always in touch with their land. The book is a conglomerate of hard pebbles of experience cemented together by the manipulative imagination of Biel himself, who obviously has a love affair of his own with the area.

That completes our list of 30 books, all outstanding, all worth reading, all important in defining ourselves to ourselves. For, after all, what is identity but the knowledge of our selves and our family, reflected in our given and sur-names, and the knowledge of our place in this universe, reflected in the town or location we add when we tell who we are. We began our discussion with the book, *Wau-Bun*, the Chippewa word for the dawn, and we ended with the Taoist "Way", the whole an Earth-circling, metaphoric resonance of imaginative expression, centering finally upon ourselves. We are figures in the landscape: Wisconsin figures in a Wisconsin landscape.

# AN ENGLISHMAN'S VIEW OF THE TEACHING OF SHAKESPEARE

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We all love the Shakespearean plays that we teach, and I suppose that our single greatest aim is to convey that love to our students and try to ensure that it will persist beyond the classroom. But we also have to acknowledge that there are certain constraints upon our teaching and certain problems to be faced in awaking that love.

A course in Shakespeare on this degree lasts for one year (three terms) and students meet for two hours every week. The first constraint on the teacher will be to draw up a list of plays that somehow does justice to Shakespeare's achievement. A selection I am using at the moment is composed of: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard II, The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV pt. I; King Lear, Tempest, Measure for Measure; Antony and Cleopatra*. Through this selection I try to convey to students some sense of Shakespeare's achievement in comedy, tragedy and history as well as his general development and increasing complexity.

The next constraint upon the teacher must be to prepare students for meeting the examination requirements of the degree. The final grade of the course goes towards the final grade on the degree, which may be one of four classes. Grading of work on Shakespeare is done through two assignments during the year and a final three-hour unseen examination. This means the writing of essays: one for each assignment, and three in the final examination. There is plenty of choice of essay topic, but the questions are carefully phrased and students are penalised for not writing directly on the topic.

What are we looking for in those essays, and on what grounds do we award the grades we do? I suppose there are four criteria:

1. Detailed understanding of the text of the play and its overall structure;

2. The ability to sift meaning and enter imaginatively into the world of the play (I shall say more about this later);

3. The ability to think constructively about 1. and 2. in the light of the question that is being asked;

4. The ability to express ideas in a logical and coherent way.

I suppose no teacher is entirely happy with constraints on his teaching. Did Elizabethan audiences write examination questions before they were allowed into the Globe? Obviously not. But I believe that the above criteria are valuable in themselves and even essential for almost any career that a student may follow in later years. Literature is not the only discipline that can give students this education, but the richness of English and American literature perhaps makes it the most rewarding discipline upon which to write essays. This was partly in F. R. Leavis's mind when he stated that English should be the centre of any university undergraduate education.

I have suggested that it is difficult to do justice to Shakespeare's achievement in a course that only lasts one year. This is because there are too many plays (not to mention the poems) and also because it is a continuing experience. I remember, as a teenager, having studied the text of *Hamlet* and looked up all the references, being at the end still bewildered by quite basic questions: what was Hamlet's motivation, what was the play really about? Shakespeare's plays provide an experience which increases in intensity and understanding as we move from adolescence into adulthood and on into middle age and old age. The teacher's responsibility is not only to prepare students for examinations but also to set the student on that life-enriching path. This can best be done, I believe, by helping the student to see where the particular relevance of each play lies - not only to his own life, that would be too restricting, but to the world around him, and to human life in general.

From that responsibility arise certain problems that I should like to consider now; and I believe there are three of them. The first two may be grouped together and involve those plays that have lost their relevance with the passage of almost four centuries; and the third comprises those that have acquired additional relevance within that period.

Amongst those plays that have tended to lose their relevance I would place the history plays. No doubt Richard II's tragic fate meets a sympathetic response from most readers; but the full significance of his reign and subsequent reigns for the average Elizabethan needs to be taught to the modern student. You will recall that the 'Deposition' scene of Act IV was never printed in Shakespeare's lifetime and the play was probably only performed with this scene once in Elizabeht's reign--in February 1601 when Essex ordered it to be acted before him on the eve of his abortive rebellion. So touchy was Elizabeth herself that in explaining her dislike of this scene she uttered the memorable words, 'Know ye not that I am Richard II'. This scene, the deposition of a rightful king, was still such a political hot potato in 1680 that the government forbade its performance twice in that year. A modern Spaniard who believes that Spanish democracy depends on King Juan Carlos might realise what this scene was getting at; but a modern Englishman or American might think first of the right of free speech and thus fail to grasp a central message of the play.

A similar act of restoration might be needed in order to understand that Jaques in *As You Like It* is as much a psychological 'type' as a person. He was the 'melancholy man', embodying a quality that cultivated Elizabethans valued and sought to emulate. So when the Duke says he wants to meet Jaques and adds 'I love to cope him in these sullen fits,/For then he's full of matter,' we need to know he is being both sincere and indulging a fashionable pose.

But how is the student to deal with the play that has acquired additional meaning since Shakespeare wrote it? *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* seem to me the two plays that fall into this category most readily. As you know, *King Lear* was never a very popular play, and from the late 17th C to the early 19thC was always performed in the Tate rewriting. In that famous version, Lear was restored to his throne and Cordelia lived to marry Edgar. Dr. Johnson spoke for the age when he declared that he 'could not endure to read again the last scenes of the play' when he came to edit it for his edition of the plays of 1765.

To us, this play more than all the others seems to speak of the condition of 20thC man. Lear plumbing the depths of horror, stripping man of all those additions that give him dignity and worth in the eyes of his fellow men so that he is no more than 'a poor, bare, forked animal', what

is he doing but presenting before our eyes what man's inhumanity to man has done to mankind!

And if we ask for a specific example of this inhumanity, we can go to t*he Merchant of Venice*. I am sure it is true to say that we can never see it as Shakespeare's contemporaries saw it--in the spirit of jollity that caused James I to order it to be twice acted before him during the pre-Lenten festivities of 1605. Is not Shylock for us, like Lear, 'more sinned against than sinning' and can we ever watch his humiliation without being aware of those events of our century that are generally known as *The Holocaust? King Lear* may have had to wait for the 20thC for its full impact to be felt. I often feel that *The Merchant of Venice* is almost overwhelmed by its superadded significance. Although Shakespeare's instinctive dramatic sense enabled him to enter into the position of an alien Jew despised by the Christian majority and portray it with some sympathy and understanding, even he could not anticipate the new barbarism of our times.

*The Merchant of Venice* was generally regarded as a comedy, rather like Richard III; it was Rowe in his edition of the plays of 1709 who first suggested that Shylock had tragic qualities. The modern student can only ask himself whether it is an anti-semitic play or a play about anti-semitism; and although the play does not sometimes seem to be aware it is posing such questions, we cannot fail to ask them and must get our students to do the same.

Both *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice* require the student to look outward, to the world in which he lives for the full significance of the plays; and this means that the best student is the one who has the liveliest perception of the world in which he lives. But what of thsoe plays that require him to turn inwards on himself, to draw upon the resources of his own psychological maturity? Many students are critical of fictional characters who are quite mildly inconsistent, ignoring the obvious truth that people are inconsistent. Often Shakespearian characters seem unnecessarily capricious or under-motivated just because a student has not realised to the same extent as Shakespeare just how people do in fact behave. He has not had the time to realise how complex people's actions and reasons for actions often are, and how subtle are the conscious and even subconscious springs of behaviour. You will no doubt have your favourite examples. Mine come from *Measure for Measure*.

In Act II scene 2 Isabella goes to the Duke's Deputy, Angelo, to plead for the life of her brother Claudio, who has been condemned to death for adultery. It is particularly ironic because Isabella is about to become a nun. Reluctantly she pleads and in the course of her pleading Angelo realises that he loves or lusts after the girl. Left once more to himself he questions his feelings in sheer bewilderment.

ANGELO From thee, even from thy virtue!
What's this, what's this? Is this her fault or mine?
The tempter or the tempted, who sins most, ha?
Not she, nor doth she tempt; but it is I
That, lying by the violet in the sun,
Do as the carrion does, not as the flow'r,
Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there? O, fie, fie, fie!
What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?
Dost thou desire her foully for those things
That make her good? O, let her brother live!
Thieves for their robbery have authority
When judges steal themselves. What, do I love her,
That I desire to hear her speak again,
And feast upon her eyes? What is 't I dream on?
O cunning enemy that, to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet,
With all her double vigor, art, and nature,
Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite. Ever till now,
When men were fond, I smil'd and wond'red how.

It is easy enough for anyone of moderate experience to understand the idea of lechery or even love being suddenly awakened. But it is equally easy to fall into the error of thinking Angelo's 'virtue' is a mask and that he is that familiar bogey, the hypocrite. On the contrary I believe that we miss an essential dimension of the play unless we realise that Angelo is a virtuous man, indeed a 'saint' as he describes himself. He has managed to master many temptations and can tell Escalus quite honestly that 'T' is one thing to be tempted. . . ./Another thing to fall'. Angelo is, however, human and Shakespeare knew that for unusual people unusual temptations are required. Even saints have their corner of evil and Isabella has unconsciously found it. This speech is an expression of the bewilderment of discovering a whole new and very unwelcome side of his character. His fall is to a greater moral depth than anyone else in the play because of his greater virtue and higher estimation of himself. Indeed in part he hates the person he loves because through her he has fallen and abused his principles. Hence his cruelty to Isabella.

Moreover, Isabella is also partly guilty--not in the sense that she has consciously done any wrong, but because being born in sin her best actions are capable of being perverted. It is original sin, not as a theological abstraction but in the form of the disappointments that dog all human action. Is this the work of a Shakespeare weary, disgusted, 'sceptical of his own ideals' (Chambers, 1906)? I think not. I believe it is profoundly and liberating in its truth; but whether it is a truth to be grasped by anyone under the age of 40, I am not sure.

Isabella returns to Angelo and learns that if she sleeps with Angelo her brother will be saved. She cannot accept the bargain and goes to tell Claudio. Her honesty will not let her deceive him, and from that arises what I regard as the most horrifying scene in all Shakespeare. Here, in Act III, scene I Claudio has just been told what Angelo has proposed.

CLAUDIO O heavens, it cannot be.
ISABELLA
Yes, he would give 't thee, from this rank offense,
So to offend him still. This night's the time
That I should do what I abhor to name,
Or else thou diest tomorrow.
CLAUDIO
Thou shalt not do 't.
ISABELLA O, were it but my life,
I 'd throw it down for your deliverance
As frankly as a pin.
CLAUDIO Thanks, dear Isabel.
ISABELLA
Be ready, Claudio, for your death tomorrow.
CLAUDIO
Yes. Has he affections in him,
That thus can make him bite the law by th' nose,
When he would force it? Sure, it is no sin,
Or of the deadly seven it is the least.
ISABELLA
Which is the least?
CLAUDIO
If it were damnable, he being so wise,
Why would he for the momentary trick
Be perdurably fin'd? O Isabel!
ISABELLA
What says my brother?
CLAUDIO Death is a fearful thing.
ISABELLA
And shamed life a hateful.
CLAUDIO
Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot,
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice,
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thought
Imagine howling—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death.
ISABELLA
Alas, alas!
CLAUDIO Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.
ISABELLA O you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is 't not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?
Heaven shield my mother play'd my father fair!
For such a warped slip of wilderness
Ne'er issu'd from his blood. Take my defiance!
Die, perish! Might but my bending down
Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed.
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee.

CLAUDIO
Nay, hear me, Isabel.
ISABELLA O, fie, fie, fie!
Thy sin's not accidental, but a trade.
Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd;
'Tis best that thou diest quickly.
CLAUDIO O hear me, Isabella!

In *Titus Andronicus* Act II scene 4 Lavinia enters 'ravished, her hands cut off and her tongue cut out'. That is horrifying certainly but nothing compared with the moral horror of a sister telling a brother she loves that he must die to preserve her own virginity. What reader has not felt a kinship with Claudio, a revulsion from Isabella and a wish that she would for once forget her virtue and go to the summer house? Surely, we may think, the result is such that the nuns would not mind all that much, perhaps they need not even know. But even if we remember Isabella's fixity of principle, Shakespeare wipes out such thoughts from our minds by putting them into the mouth of the very person who, of all others, cannot and should not say them --Claudio. Is not Isabella's retort, that it is 'a kind of incest' severe but right? She feels almost personally contaminated by the foulness of Claudio's ignoble but understandable suggestion.

But Shakespeare is not finished with us. We cannot deny Isabella her virginity, because she is to become a nun and her personal integrity is deeply implicated. Angelo's bargain is a form of violence even a form of rape and far outweighs Isabella's 'fault'. Is Shakespeare not showing us the circumstances in which a virtue, by definition desirable, not only becomes negated but may become 'deadly' in the most literal sense of the word, when confronted by a certain kind of evil?

The play here reaches an impasse. Only the duke will be able to extricate everyone, and he only just manages to do so. Those who believe that good eventually triumphs in this world may take some comfort in the knowledge that Isabella's compliance with Angelo's demand would not have saved her brother, while her refusal alerts the duke to what he should do.

I have gone through two scenes or parts of scenes in some detail to emphasise my point that we demand much of students. Not only do students need to cultivate the skills of reading texts, writing essays that are logical and coherent, but we require them to show a sensitive awareness of the relevance of any play; and in certain circumstances this sensitivity may be stretched to the limit. But that is exactly why we teach Shakespeare.

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# N.C.T.E. ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS, 1983

MARK PAUL BOGNER, CRAIG HIGH SCHOOL, JANESVILLE

President of The National Honor Society, Mark's awards are Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute National Medalist for Math-Science and Badger Boy's State. His activities include wrestling, tennis and power lifting; the Spanish and Lettermen's Clubs.

SARA COLLINS, OSHKOSH NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Sara, a National Merit Commended Student, is editor of her school's paper and has received top journalism awards: newswriting, in-depth reporting. President of the National Honor Society and the symphony orchestra, Sara also is on the Student Congress, the Math Team and the chamber orchestra.

SARAH C. DAHL, SHOREWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Sarah's awards include the National Merit Commendation, Badger Girl's State, National Honor Society and the USAA Foreign Language Award. She currently participates on Student Council, forensics, the newspaper, drama, chorus, tennis and the French Club.

DAVID EICH, APPLETON EAST HIGH SCHOOL

A National Merit Semi-finalist, David was Governor of Badger Boy's State. Other awards: National Honor Society, Oshkosh Academic, Khumsted Athletic and Twill and Scroll. President of the Student Council, he participated in football, swimming and tennis; in debate, forensics, drama and chorus.

JAMES M. FENNER, EAU CLAIRE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

James is the station manager of the radio club and the electrician for the theatre department. A National Honor Society member, he is also involved with the symphonic

BOGNER

COLLINS

DAHL

EICH

FENNER

FISCHER

HIGLEY

KOTENBERG

LARMORE

MUELLER

PICARD

PODOLIN

SCHRAG

SISK

SZABO

band and forensics. He placed first in the 1983 Wisconsin State Debate and was a quarter-finalist in the National CFL Debate.

TERRENCE E. FISCHER, APPLETON WEST HIGH SCHOOL

A National Honor Society member, Terrence has been active in theater. Other activities: cheerleading and intramural basketball. He was a Badger Boy's State alternate.

MARK HIGLEY, OSHKOSH NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Mark is a National Merit Semi-finalist; his awards include: Kiwanis Citizenship, Badger Boy's State, National Honor Society. He has been active in music: director, Madrigal Singers and Pep Band; president, Concert Band; musicals; Fox Valley Youth Symphony. Additional activities: Math Team, Drama Club, Student Congress.

KELLEY KOTENBERG, OSHKOSH WEST HIGH SCHOOL

Kelley has won first place creative writing awards in both short story and poetry; she is co-editor of her school's literary magazine. Other activities include drama, forensics, yearbook and the Spanish Club.

KATHY LARMORE, MUSKEGO HIGH SCHOOL

A National Merit Commended Student, Kathy is a member of the National Honor Society. She is on the staff of the newspaper and a member of the Spanish Club; she is a piano accompanist and assistant organist of her church.

BRAD MUELLER, EAU CLAIRE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

A National Merit Semifinalist and National Honor Society member, Brad holds leadership positions in forensics, drama and radio clubs. A participant on Quiz Bowl Teams and Badger Boys' State, he was a member of the 1983 State Debate Championship Team and has won a district oratorical contest.

DAVID PICARD, APPLETON EAST HIGH SCHOOL

David is a member of the French Club. His interests in history and writing.

GEORGE PODOLIN, NICOLET HIGH SCHOOL, GLENDALE

George is a National Merit Semifinalist and a National Honor Society member. He received a top rating for a vocal bass solo at the 1983 State Music Festival. George has been a member of Nicolet math teams and has participated in sports, starting as an offensive guard in varsity football.

NAOMI SCHRAG, MADISON WEST HIGH SCHOOL

Naomi edits her school's literary magazine, tutors American history to foreign students and is in a choral group. Naomi took first place in the state for Spanish pronunciation and in National Spanish Writer exam.

ROBERT SISK, CASIMER PULASKI HIGH SCHOOL, MILWAUKEE

Robert's interests are in journalism and mass communications.

CATHY SZABO, MOUNT HOREB HIGH SCHOOL

A National Merit Semifinalist, Cathy is a member of the National Honor Society. Her school activities cover a wide range: track, AFS Club, French and Drama Clubs, newspaper staff. A deputy commander of the Civil Air Patrol, she has received both the Billy Mitchell and Amelia Earhart Awards.

GREGORY TATHAM, WHITEFISH BAY HIGH SCHOOL

Gregory, a National Merit Semifinalist, was a member of the Math Team and the National Honor Society. He has received awards in mathematics and French.

Compiled by Thekla Fagerlie, UW-River Falls

# BOOKS
## FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Hanne Türk. *A Surprise for Max, Max Versus the Cube, The Rope Skips Max;* others. Boston: Neugebauer Press U.S.A., Inc., 1982. (pre-school to grade 3)

Against the tide of little publishing of books coming from non-English speaking cultures there have always been some editors who have continued to seek out and publish such books. The stories of Max the mouse, published originally abroad, though they do not reflect another culture directly, are interesting because of the great sense of joy and play that comes through. I do not especially like mouse characters, but I do like Max. His play is child's play and his joy at the simple things of life is the joy we all know or knew in our best moments. In *The Rope Skips Max*, Max tries to jump rope, but does not do well. The rope catches on a branch and breaks, but Max continues swinging his two pieces of rope happily. He then is distracted by a flower which he must look at and smell. He ties his rope together, but now when he skips it, it catches right under his nose. Rather than showing frustration, Max is seen happily skipping away, swinging his rope in just one hand. It matters not that he doesn't skip rope well, or that the rope catches, breaks, or is too short. What does matter is the wholehearted joy of the activity, however it is done. Rubik's Cube players who do not have the secret will experience similar delight in *Max and the Cube* when he can't get it right, throws it away, walks away, turns away, but always comes back. And they will laugh at Max's final solution that takes the frustration, which Max and cube players experience, out of the situation. *A Surprise for Max* is the simplest of the three and therefore of greatest interest to pre-schoolers. Max delights in finding a package, finding ways to open the package, prolonging the suspense of not knowing, and going happily away with the toy inside. The other *Max* books which are available also have a joy of life in them.

Hanne Turk's illustrations have little detail but each detail has importance to the story and to Max. The transitions from picture to picture are easy to make--a characteristic of a good picture book and a good wordless book. The humor, pictures, and action are clear by facial expression, and body position. There is joy and action in each picture.

Betty J. Peltola, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Thomas Baird. *Walk Out a Brother*. New York: Harper and Row, 1983. JHS.
Michael French. *Pursuit*. New York: Delacorte, 1982.

These two chase adventures, featuring the hunting of one individual by another, call to mind the classic short story, "The Most Dangerous Game" by R. Connell or the most recent thriller, *Deathwatch* by Robb White. Similar in plot action, conflict and setting, the Baird and French books differ in featuring teenage protagonists. They are being pursued by a ruthless killer who would prefer the death to seem accidental. We witness the entangling of the hero-victim, his innocence catching him off guard, followed by his gradual realization and use of skills and wits to outsmart his pursuer. Like *Deathwatch, Pursuit* uses a secondary climax: the seemingly nice guy villain accuses his intended victim of attempted murder and is believed. *Walk Out a Brother* offers a variant subplot, a conflict between the hero and his dominating brother which has forced him to run away from home.

Both books offer drama and intensity. The deviousness of the killers, the perils and threats add up. The methods used by the victim to save himself are challenging, expressing valuable woods and mountain lore. The characters are developed enough to become individuals engaging the sympathy of adolescent readers. Altogether these are recommendable adventure novels.

SHORT REVIEWS: RECOMMENDABLE NEW BOOKS

Janet A. Stegeman. *Last Seen on Hopper's Lane*. New York: Dial Press, 1982.

Kerry, stopping to investigate an abandoned mansion, is abducted by a drug dealer and his young unwilling accomplice. A revenge factor magnifies the tension. Even escape doesn't mean safety.

Harry W. Paige. *The Summer War*. New York: Frederick Warne, 1983.

When Ely discovers a human skeleton during a camp interlude, he unwittingly uncovers a dark past of the peaceful resort community. Was the dead man a victim of World War II anti-German hysteria? Before he realizes it, Ely is overinvolved.

Charles Ferry. *Raspberry One*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983.

This historical novel of World War II takes us into the Pacific theater with two aircrewmen whose innocence is shattered with the devastation of their squadron and aircraft carrier. Beyond war loss and tragedy, the book recounts the way back to personal strength.

Paula Danziger. *The Divorce Express*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1982.

Resentful of her parents' divorce, Phoebe tries to adjust to living with her father, an artist, and visiting her mother, a businesswoman, on weekends. Life seems to be settling only to come apart as values clash with her mother's announced remarriage plans.

## FOR TEACHERS

Edith Blicksilver. *The Ethnic American Woman: Problems, Protests, Lifestyle*. Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1978.

This anthology is ambitious in purpose and rich in variety. Blicksilver's goal as stated in her preface is "to include the wide range of female life experiences to demonstrate the joy and anguish of being an ethnic woman." Angry feminist voices such as those of poets Gwendolyn Brooks and Adrienne Rich share space with the more reconciled and conservative viewpoints of scholar Ann C. Hooper in "The Proper Thing to Say, to Do, and to Wear," and Doras Reed Benbow's, "My Grandmother the Wasp." Poems, short stories, and excerpts from novels, autobiographies and memoirs prevail, but a few polemic pieces such as Shirley Chisholm's "A Black Congresswoman Speaks Out For Women's Rights," are also included. Illustrations, like Dorothea Lange's wonderful photograph of a Japanese-American girl, enhance the text. A wide range of ethnicity is represented, and ethnicity is defined broadly to include religious, national, racial, linguistic, and regional differences. Recognized authors such as Alice Walker, Ntozake Shange, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Mary McCarthy, public performers like Joan Baez and Buffy Sainte Marie, and figures from women's history (Sojourner Truth, Rose Schneiderman) join more obscure ethnic women writers who record their own experience in a simple, lucid and insightful manner. (Marie Prisland's "Memories of Our Old Wood Stove" is a good example.) This book's strength is its breadth and variety. Its weakness (albeit, a minor one) is a byproduct of its ambition; it overcategorizes, grouping its contents under twelve thematic divisions which tend to overlap and to lose their distinction as the reader moves through the 353 pages of text.

Blicksilver's introduction identifies four large categories into which her selections fall: first is ethnic women's dealings with the "universal problems of God, life, love, fate, frustration and death"; second is ethnic women's social protest; third, conflicts between ethnic groups or between new immigrants and more assimilated members of the group; finally, the tragedies of dislocation (Indian reservations, Japanese interment camps) and the alienation of many women from their firmly patriarchal and traditional ethnic communities. These are strong, specific categories; the selections, however, appear under the twelve aforementioned headings which range from "Growing Up Ethnic" to "Seeking a Better Tomorrow." Twelve headings are simply too many, and the reader struggles unnecessarily to fit these to the four ideas developed in the introduction. Organizationally, the book should be simpler.

Blicksilver further includes a copious appendix in which alternate ethnic and generic tables of contents appear, as well as topics for class discussion and research papers, biographical sketches of the authors, and suggested further readings. Useful material this, but the biographical sketches would be more serviceable if they prefaced the selections, particularly since many of the authors are unfamiliar names. Also, the topics for discussion and research would be more helpful pedagogically were they located at the end of each unit. The work deserves a clearer, more rational overall plan to make it more teachable; its splendid contents deserve to be (and could be) taught at many classroom levels.

Laura Quinn, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 29 - Index: *Wisconsin English Journal*/Volumes 1-15. Compiled by Eugene Engeldinger and Barbara Stevens, UW-Eau Claire. $2.00 - member/member libraries; $3.00 - non-members.

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 30 - Bibliography of Science Fiction. April, 1974. Compiled by Roger D. Sween, UW-Platteville. A listing, briefly annotated, of almost 300 recommended novels, short stories, and anthologies, 43 best films from 1902-1972, and 28 secondary sources included. $1.00

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SERVICE BULLETIN No. 37 - Wisconsin Authors: Literary Map and Bulletin. Compiled by Duane and Maureen Roen. The twenty-three by twenty-nine-inch map includes drawings of scenes from the lives or the books of thirty-seven major Wisconsin authors. The map also includes a list of 126 adult authors and 60 juvenile authors. The 41-page bulletin includes all of the information found on the map, as well as a wealth of biographical and bibliographic material. Many titles listed are labeled as ones suitable for either elementary or secondary students. $3.00 plus $1.00 postage for map and bulletin ($1.00 for bulletin alone).

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 38 - Bibliography of Native American Books for Elementary Grades. April, 1979. Compiled by Maxine Burress, UW-Stevens Point. An annotated bibliography of books for children, grades K-8. Grade levels are indicated. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 39 - Alcohol and Alcoholism in Children's Literature. Compiled by Carl Personke, UW-Madison. An annotated bibliography of books on alcohol, alcohol abuse and alcoholism. Evaluation of effectiveness is included. 60¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 40 - Index: *Wisconsin English Journal*/Volumes 16-20. Compiled by Barbara Stevens, UW-Eau Claire. See Service Bulletin No. 29. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 41 - A Small Community Serves Its Gifted. April 1981. By Monica L. Josten, South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Including: method of selecting students, handling problems, curriculum, and results of the program.

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 42 - Elementary Children's Writing--A Study and an Approach. Beverly Nordberg, Fox Point, 1982. Discussion of criteria for evaluating children's writing and their application. Teaching suggestions offered. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 43 - Wisconsin Writers. Compiled by Robert Wells. An overview of current Wisconsin writers with a bibliography of their work. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 44 - Evaluating Student Writing. February, 1982. Nancy S. Haugen, UW-Madison. Discussion of evaluation principles and tactics with specific time saving suggestions. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 45 - Forty Short Writing Activities. November, 1983. Jane H. Yarbrough, University of Wisconsin Center, Marinette, Wisconsin. 75¢


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